

## **Major John William Burke Cole 1920 - 2011**

John Cole was born in Paris on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1920. The family farmed at Combe Manor near Newbury until 1926 and then lived in London, then from 1930 at Issercleran, Co Galway; he had two brothers – the youngest died of TB in 1939, the other, Squadron Leader Michael James Burke Cole in an unexplained flying accident in 1953.

Educated at Eton and Trinity Cambridge (languages – French and German), much of his early life was away from home.

Joining the Coldstream Guards in 1940, he served in North Africa where he was wounded and captured in 1942. Prison hospitals in Italy were followed by prison camp in Germany. The hunger and cold of the winter of 1944/45 in camp near Brunswick led to the POWs decision to create the Brunswick Club for Boys in London, now the Brunswick Club for Young People. He supported this club for the rest of his life.

After the war he continued as a serving officer, in Malaya (mentioned in Despatches), and in the Canal Zone, leaving in 1954.

He married Anne Crichton in 1951, and had three children James, Michael and Elizabeth. Anne died in 2004.

He farmed at Combe in the 1950s and in West Woodhay and North End in the 1960s to late 1980s. He was President of the Newbury Show in 1971 and retained his interest in agriculture until he died. He served as an independent on local councils, as Chairman of Hungerford RDC and as first chairman of Newbury District Council, as High Sherriff and as a Deputy Lieutenant, and as President of Newbury Operatic for 34 years. He was chair of governors at Inkpen primary school, a local JP and president of Newbury Swimming Club.

Whether presenting prizes at the Crafty Raft Race, or participating in the reopening of Hungerford Lock, presenting the Major Cole Putting Cup or opening the new presses for the NWN he enjoyed whatever he did. He was very much a hands-on person with a genuine interest in planning amongst other areas, and in encouraging young people in education and sport.

He also shared with his wife an interest in local charities. He was chairman of the committee managing the Greenham House Family Centre and for many years organised the drivers for the Mayor's Drive.

There was still time however for holidays with his family, whether skiing or fishing in his beloved Ireland. He also enjoyed reading, doing jigsaw puzzles, studying family history and old silver; above all he was a "people" person who wanted to see his family and friends, a party goer to the end.

He died peacefully surrounded by his family on 29<sup>th</sup> December 2011 rather earlier than he would have wished – he was after all only 91 and still delivering meals on wheels.

James Cole